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ABSTRACT

Highlights of a public opinion survey on the quality of Chicago Public Schools are presented in this executive summary of a more detailed report (UD 024 295). First, characteristics of public schools parents are outlined (although parents of students in private schools and non-parents were included in the survey). Public school parents, it is reported, are considerably poorer, less educated, more heavily minority, and more likely to have larger families than parents of non-public school children. Next, major survey findings are outlined. Major findings include the following: (1) Chicagoans as a whole give their public schools a "C" and parents of children in public schools rate the schols more highly. (2) Lack of discipline, gangs, and inadeqate funding are seen as the biggest problems. (3) More course requirements are favored. (4) High school students should pass a standard examination before graduation, the public believes. (5) When presented with a list of proposed school reforms, the respondents most favored giving help to slow students. (6) Chicagoans oppose proposals to lengthen the school day and year. (7) Respondents would increase teacher requirements. (8) Most feel principals should have more authority to run schools. (9) A majority feel the schools need more money. (10) Supplies, repairs, and special programs are considered the most important uses for any additional dollars. Seventeen bar graphs are included in the report. (KH)

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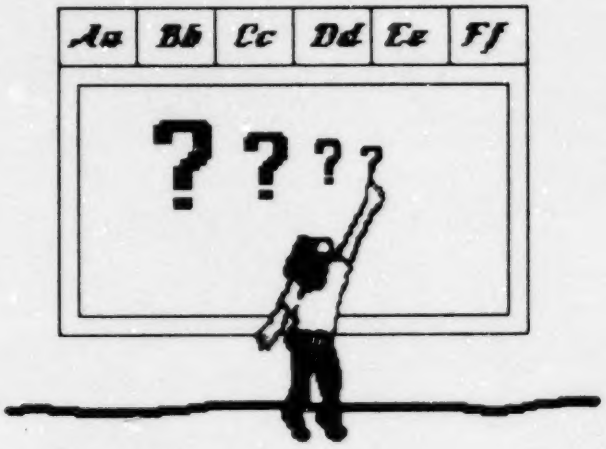
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Chicagoans View Their Public Schools

A Public Opinion Survey



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CHICAGOANS VIEW
THEIR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

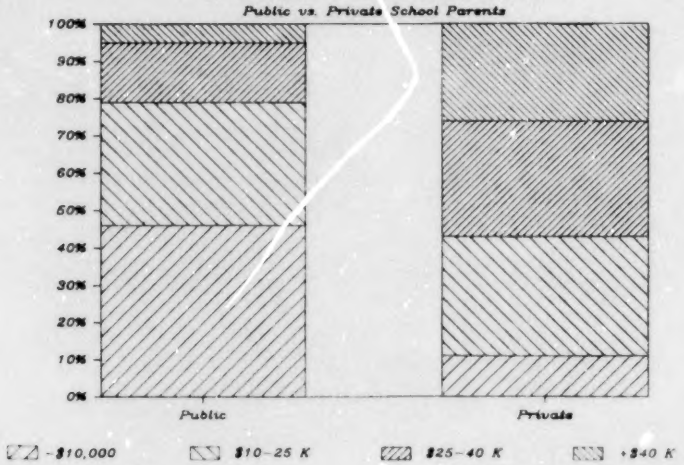
Characteristics of Public School Parents

This public opinion survey of 1,816 residents of Chicago, in addition to discerning public preferences, provides a wealth of data about those who utilize the public schools. The data from the survey has been analyzed discretely for parents of public school students, parents of private/parochial school students, parents of children not currently in school, and non-parents. Parents of public school children are quite unlike these other groups in several ways.

INCOME

Parents of public school children are considerably poorer than parents of private school children. Among public school parents, 46% have annual incomes under $10,000, and 79% have incomes under $25,000. Only 10% of private school parents have incomes under $10,000, and only 42% under $25,000.

INCOME DISTRIBUTION



	Public	Private
Under $10,000	46%	11%
$10 - 25,000	33%	32%
$25 - 40,000	16%	31%
Over 40,000	5%	26%

Income also relates to family size; those parents with incomes under $10,000 average 2.4 children per family, with the average steadily decreasing to 1.8 per family over $40,000.

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EDUCATION

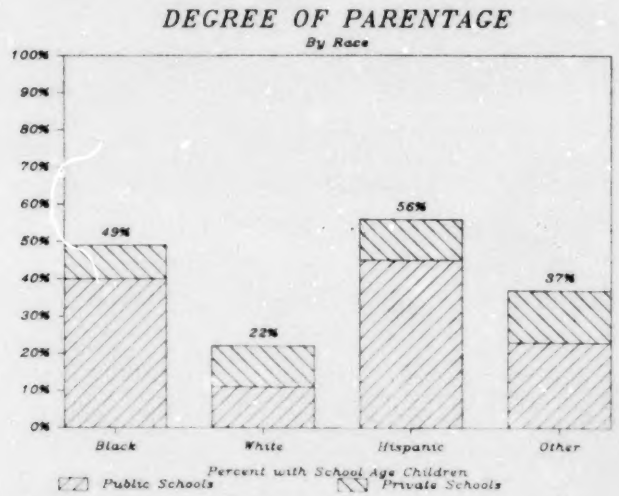
Public school parents generally have received less education than parents of private school students. Among those parents who, themselves, had not finished high school, 88% have their children in the public schools; only 12% of this group are able to utilize private schools. Among parents who are college graduates, only 54% have children in the public schools, while 46% use private schools. Only 10% of all public school parents have graduated from college, but 28% were, themselves, dropouts.

Educational Level of Parents

	Public	Private
Dropout	28%	11%
H.S. Grad	35%	34%
Some College	27%	29%
College Grad	10%	26%

RACE

Hispanics and blacks have far higher proportions of families with school age children than do whites. Among Hispanic respondents, 56% had school age children as did 49% of blacks, 37% of other racial/ethnic groups, but only 22% of whites.



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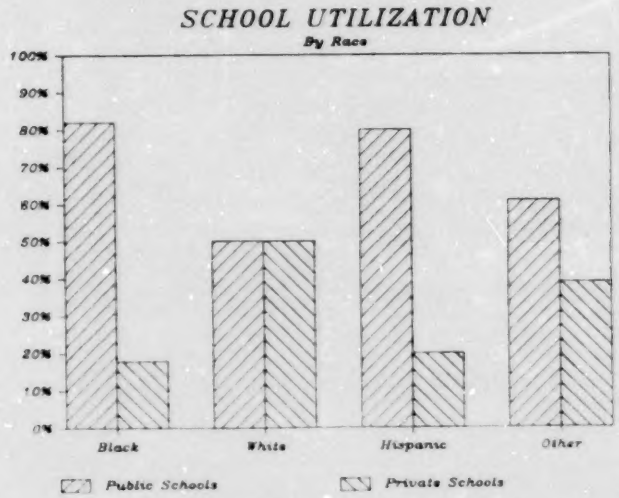
In addition to having far higher proportions of families with children, Hispanics and blacks use the public school more heavily than do whites; 82% of black parents have their children in the public schools, as do 78% of Hispanic parents. But only half of white parents have their children in the public schools. Thus, only 11% of white adults have children in the Chicago public schools.



SUMMARY

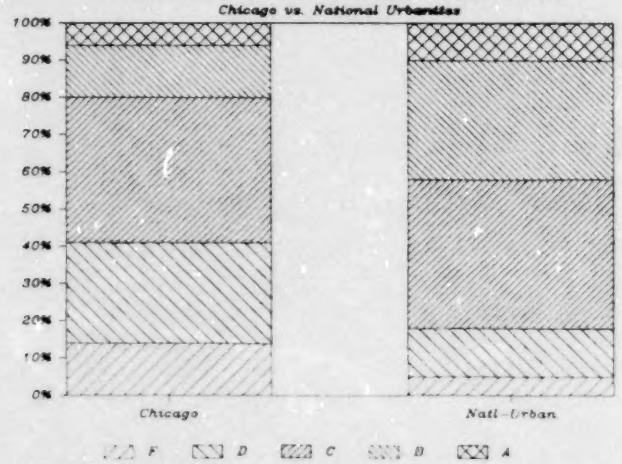
Thus, public school parents may be characterized as considerably poorer, less educated, and more heavily minority than are private school parents. Further, their families are likely to be larger than are families utilizing private schools, meaning they have even fewer resources per child to invest in their children's education. These differences are reflected in differential responses to many issues raised in this survey, from grading the public schools to the desirability of early childhood education.

PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

1. THE CHICAGO SCHOOLS ARE AVERAGE; RESIDENTS GIVE THEM A "C"

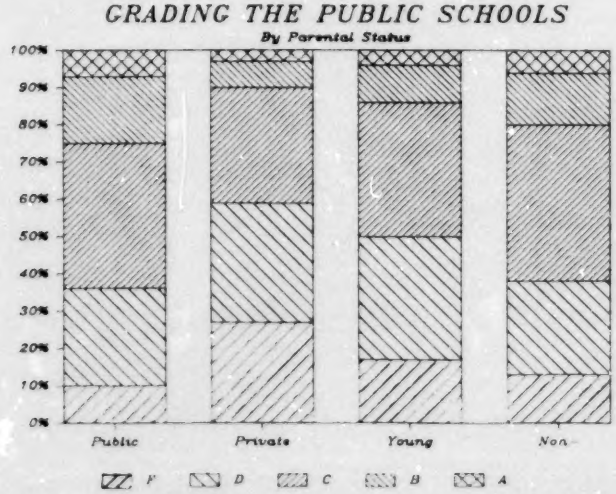
Overall, Chicagoans give the Chicago Public Schools a mark of "C"; 59% of all respondents graded the schools as average or above. Urban respondents to the nationwide Gallup poll rated their schools somewhat more highly, with 82% rating them average or above.

GRADING THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS



Parents of children in public schools rate the schools more highly (63% average or above) while a majority of parents of children in private schools (59%) felt the schools were below average or failing. Parents with children not yet in school rate the schools slightly higher than private school parents; non-parents rate the schools very much as do public school parents.

GRADING THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS



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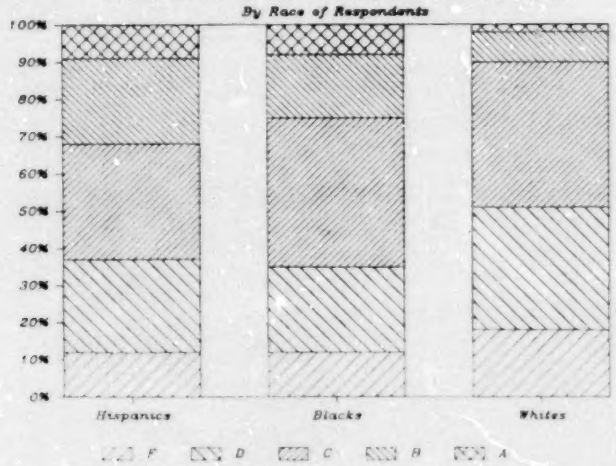
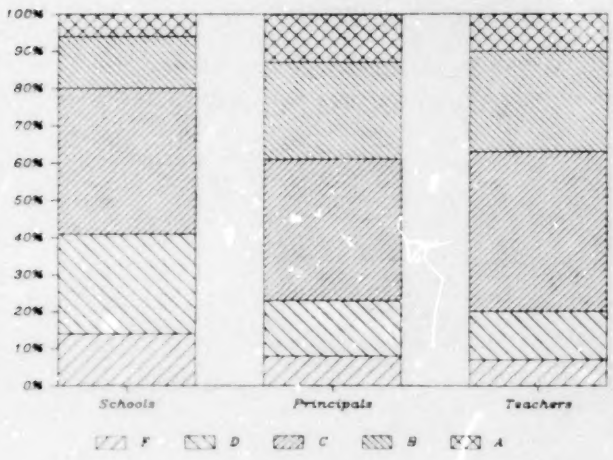
Blacks (65%) and Hispanics (64%) rated the schools more highly than did whites (49% average or above marks). Hispanics were far more likely to give above average grades than were other groups (32% above average).

GRADING THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

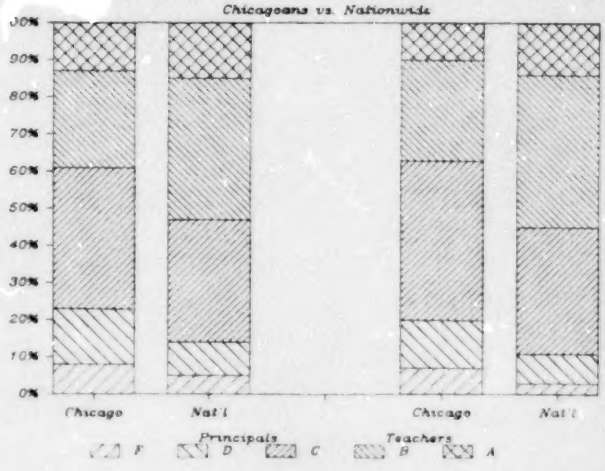


Teachers and principals generally received higher grades than did the schools as a whole. Teachers were rated average or above by 80% of the respondents; principals received that same rating from 77%.
However, both teachers and principals were judged more harshly by Chicagoans than were their colleagues in other urban areas.

GRADING THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS



GRADING PRINCIPALS AND TEACHERS



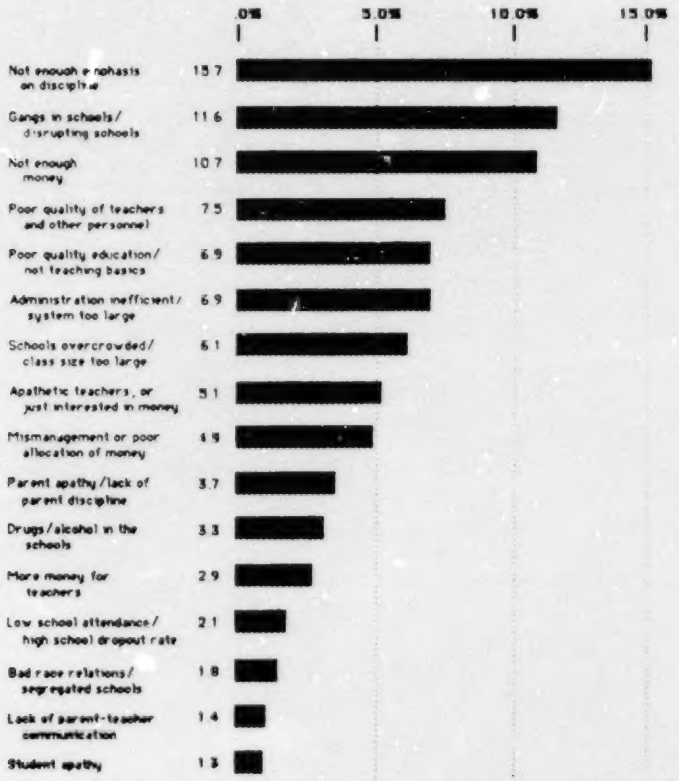
(See Sections I.2 and II.1 & 2, pp. 3 & 7)

2. LACK OF DISCIPLINE, GANGS, AND INADEQUATE FUNDING ARE SEEN AS THE BIGGEST PROBLEMS FACING CHICAGO SCHOOLS

Lack of Discipline (16%); Gangs (12%, Hispanics noted this problem more frequently, 20%); and Inadequate Funding (11%) were most frequently mentioned when residents were asked to define the most pressing problems facing the Chicago Public Schools. Only a few respondents mentioned Mismanagement, Dropouts, or Race Relations as areas of major concern.

(Section III, pg. 8)

Biggest Problems Facing Chicago Schools



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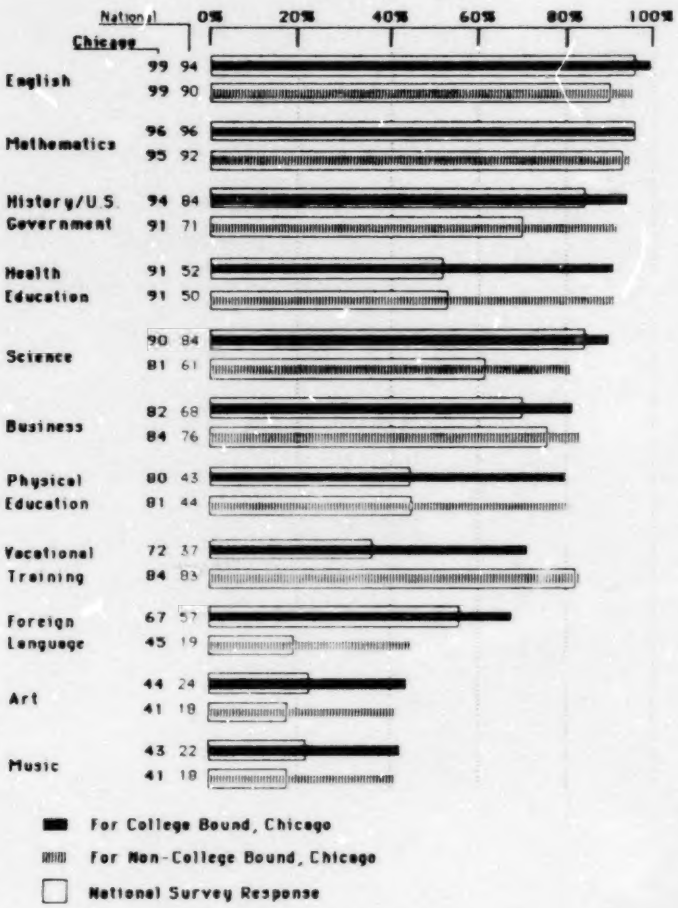
3. MORE COURSE REQUIREMENTS ARE FAVORED

Overwhelmingly, Chicagoans favor a tougher curriculum for high schools than the current requirements. Blacks regularly preferred more course requirements than did Hispanics and whites, particularly empasizing the need for foreign languages, even for students not planning to attend college.

(Section IV.2b, pg. 13)

Courses Required of High School Students



4. HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS SHOULD PASS A TEST BEFORE GRADUATION

Nine out of ten Chicagoans (88%) feel that all high school students in the United States should be required to pass a standard examination in order to get a high school diploma.

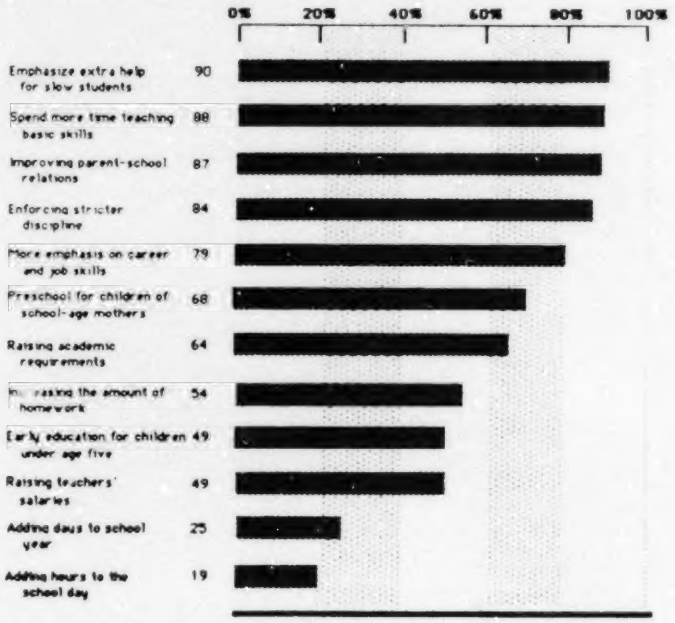
(Section IV.2a, pg. 13)

5. HIGHEST REFORM RATING IS GIVEN TO HELP FOR SLOW STUDENTS

Chicagoans favored more help for slower students (90%), more time teaching basic skills (88%), improving parent-school relations (87%), and enforcing tougher discipline (84%), when presented with a list of proposed school reforms.

(Section IV.1, pg. 10)

Reform Choices Considered Very Important


0%
20%
40%
60%
80%
100%
Emphasize extra help for slow students 90
Spend more time teaching basic skills 88
Improving parent-school relations 87
Enforcing stricter discipline 84
More emphasis on career and job skills 79
Preschool for children of school-age mothers 68
Raising academic requirements 64
Increasing the amount of homework 54
Early education for children under age five 49
Raising teachers' salaries 49
Adding days to school year 25
Adding hours to the school day 19

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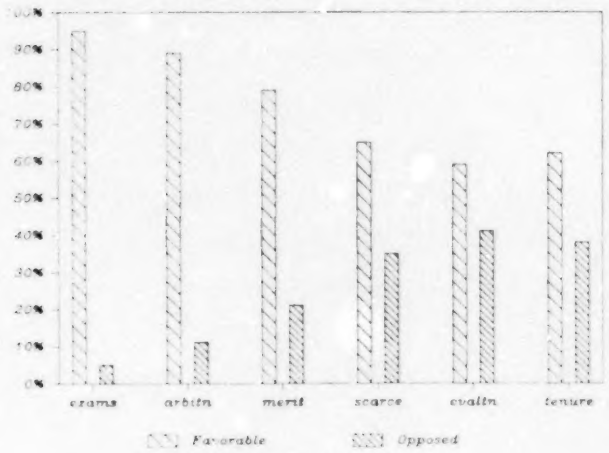
6. CHICAGOANS OPPOSE LENGTHENING SCHOOL DAY, SCHOOL YEAR

Adding hours to the school day (19% thought it very important, but 55% opposed the idea) and adding days to the school year (25% for, 44% opposed) were reforms largely rejected by respondents. Surprisingly, less than a majority of respondents thought early childhood education (49% for, 24% opposed), and raising teacher salaries (49% for, 13% opposed) were very important. (Section IV.1, pg. 10)

7. RESPONDENTS WOULD REQUIRE MORE OF TEACHERS

Chicagoans would require more of teachers: 95% favor competency exams before teachers can be certified (already a policy in Chicago); they favor binding arbitration (89%), merit pay (79%), added pay for teachers in subject areas of shortages (65%), and peer review (59%). They feel teachers are paid about the right amount now, but still favor tenure (62%). (Section IV.5, pg. 18)

REQUIRING MORE OF TEACHERS



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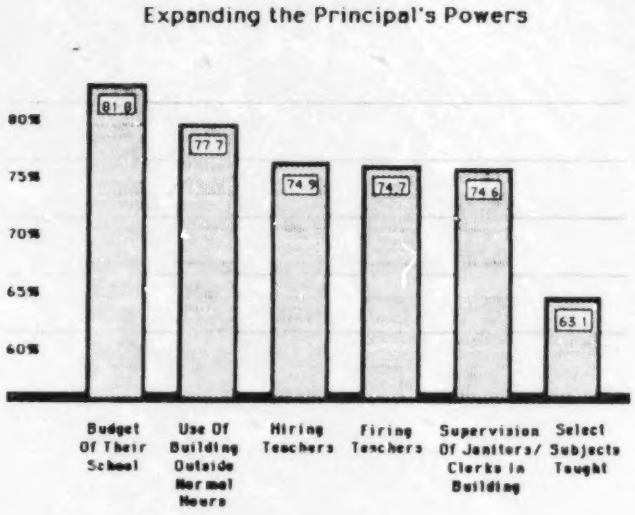
8. PRINCIPALS SHOULD HAVE MORE AUTHORITY TO RUN SCHOOLS

Chicagoans think principals should have more authority to run their schools, specifically regarding the school budget (82%), the use of the building (78%), supervision of non-teaching staff (75%), the hiring and firing of teachers (75%), and the selection of subjects taught (63%).

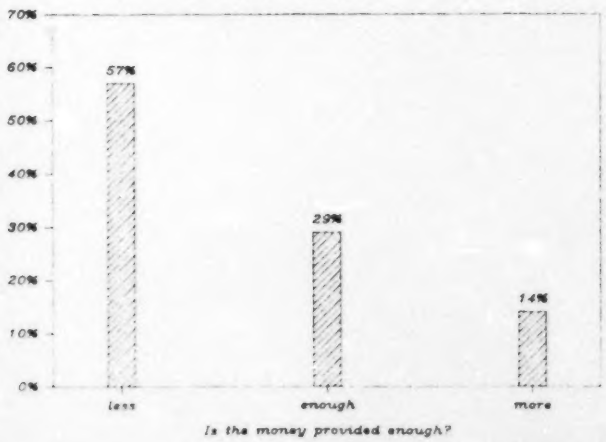
(Section IV.5d, pg. 19)



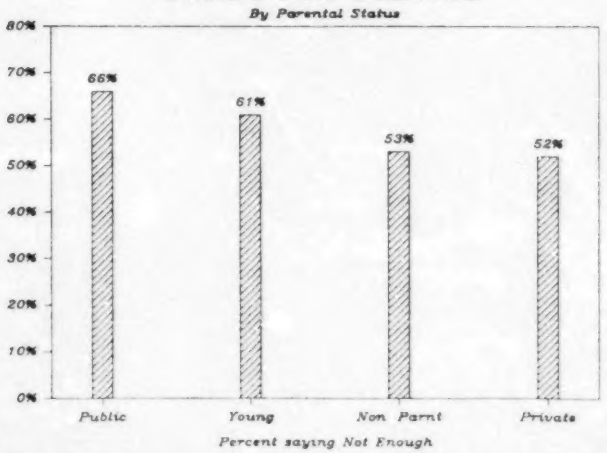
9. CHICAGO SCHOOLS NEED MORE MONEY

The majority of Chicagoans (57%) feel the schools do not have enough money, 29% feel they get enough money and 14% think they receive too much. More public school parents (66%) feel the schools do not get enough money, but even a majority of parents of private school children (52%) and non-parents (53%) think this.

MONEY FOR CHICAGO SCHOOLS



FUNDS FOR SCHOOLS



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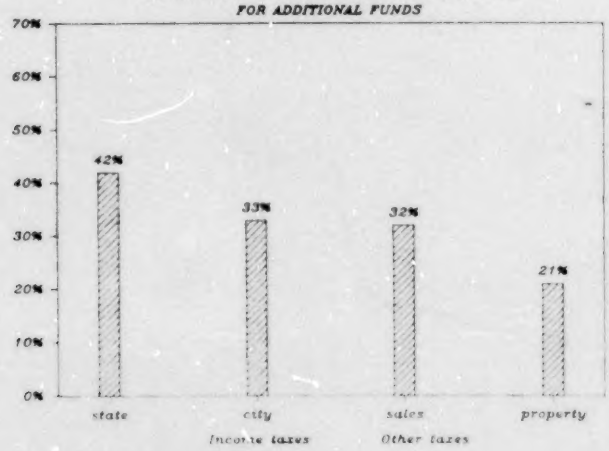
When asked to choose among four options, no single additional tax received majority support. The largest support was for increasing the state income tax (43%), with less support for a new city income tax (33%), increasing the sales tax (32%), and least support for increasing the property tax (22%). (Section V.1, pg. 23)

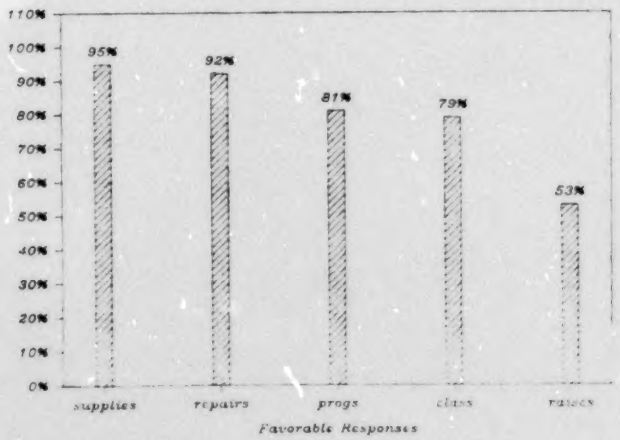
PREFERRED TAX SOURCE
FOR ADDITIONAL FUNDS



10. SUPPLIES, REPAIRS, SPECIAL PROGRAMS TOP USES FOR MORE DOLLARS

If more money were available to the public schools, respondents preferred that it be put into additional supplies (93%), repairs (91%), more special programs (79%), and lower class size (76%), before raising teacher salaries (53%). (Section V.2, pg. 24)

USES OF ADDITIONAL FUNDS



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